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Development of a Method for Utilizing Oriental Belly Dance Rhythms to Deepen a Client's Understanding of Their Emotions After Experiencing Trauma, And Move Towards Healing

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Abstract

A workshop was offered to local women in North Eastern Ohio who have experienced trauma and are facing uncomfortable emotions or unpleasant memories as a result. A guided body scan, Focusing Oriented Art directives, and improvisational movement explorations were employed to deepen awareness and understanding of the emotions and memories participants wished to have better control over. Three movement rhythms, which are central to the ancient feminine dance form popularly known as belly dance, were explored through improvisational movement both as a group and independently. These movement rhythms included staccato pops and locks, fluid figure eights, and vibratory shimmies. Participants reported a variety of benefits gleamed from engaging in the three movement rhythms. Staccato pops and locks helped participants explore the space around themselves and reclaim their bodies. Fluid figure eights were found to be helpful for self-soothing as well as encouraging further understanding and internal exploration. Vibratory shimmies proved beneficial in helping clients shake loose areas where they felt stuck, be it mentally, emotionally, and/or physically. Shimmies also helped reduce unwanted self-imposed limitations and shaming tendencies. One movement rhythm sometimes gave way to the need for a different movement rhythm as their process of understanding and moving towards healing unfolded. Movement from isolation to socialization was also noted through the course of this workshop. Participants reported the workshop to be a success and expressed a wish for more of such events in the greater community, feeling that there is substantial need for accessible activities which promote healing.

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Introduction

Approximately half of the women in the United States will witness or directly experience a traumatic event within their lifetime (American Psychological Association [APA], 2020; National Center for PTSD, 2019; SAMHSA-HRSA, n.d.). The DSM-5 identifies traumatic events as experiencing or exposure to "actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence" (APA, 2013, p. 271). The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (n.d.) reports that in the United States of America, one in four women experience intimate partner violence, and/or stalking which results in fearfulness, physical harm, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and more. Research suggests that women are two to three times more likely to develop PTSD than men, with an estimated 9.7% of women in the U.S. who will experience PTSD within their lifetime (National Center for PTSD, 2019).

Researchers have found that interventions which employ visual arts, such as drawing, painting, mask making, and mandalas, can be beneficial for female clients who have experienced traumas (Linder, 2015; Murray, Spencer, Stickl & Crowe, 2017). In a study that included a variety of mixed-media art projects, some benefits that were reported included: relaxation, enjoyment, noticing how one felt versus how they deserve to feel, expression of feelings, acknowledging hidden emotions, expressing one's self beyond words, releasing things they no longer wished to carry, releasing pain, relating to others, and helpful for self-growth. Most participants drew clear lines as to how these benefits grew out of their engagement with the artistic explorations.

Utilizing the arts in therapy can also assist the researcher gaining a deeper understanding of the client (Linder, 2015). It was only through arts-based research that researcher Linder could appreciate the "participants' raw, bitter courage, as well as [the researcher's] own impossible hope for [the participants'] total healing" (p. 150). Numerous studies have demonstrated that arts have a great healing power, and a strong capacity to carry more information than words.

Dance has held a significant presence in both healing and disease prevention in many cultures around the globe and has been noted to help "stimulate the life energies in our bodies" (Leseho & Maxwell, 2010, p. 19). After interviewing twenty-nine participants from a variety of ages (ranging from 16 to 67), ethnic backgrounds (women from 12 countries), spiritual backgrounds, occupations, and styles of dance, researchers noted overarching categories of themes that emerged: empowerment, transformation, and a connection to Spirit (participants used a variety of terms so researchers chose to use the term Spirit). Researchers Leseho, and Maxwell reported, "[f]or many of the interviewees, dance promotes a letting go as it can bypass the mind or ego and go straight to the body and spirit" (p. 23). Some participants felt that movement helped them unblock themselves, accessing emotions that may not have been accessible through talk therapy. Feeling shifts in emotional states offered women new perspectives on themselves and their relationships. Other women reported feeling energy shifts when dancing, so they then utilized dance to cope with stress and unpleasant emotional states. Women also reported feeling more present and grounded within their bodies, connected to the here and now in time and space, and connected to or expressing Spirit. Dance helped these women appreciate their bodies, access their inner wisdom and Spirit, express emotions, and facilitate a shift from distressing emotions to more positive feelings.

When looking at emotions, Laban Movement Analysis helps researchers better understand how the body expresses emotions beyond facial expressions. Recent studies have demonstrated that specific movement components are "sufficient for emotion recognition" and could also enhance and/or elicit specific emotions (Melzer, Shafir & Tsachor, 2019, p. 1). Others have suggested that specific rhythms, particularly staccato and flowing rhythms, may be utilized in gaining a deeper perspective into one's psyche, and facilitate transformation (Roth, 1998). While movement is beginning to appear in the study of emotions, there is ample room for furthering the implementation of specific movements and rhythms in the therapeutic setting.

By engaging in the arts in a therapeutic setting, clients are offered a variety of tools for both expression and exploration of themselves, as well as an assortment of effective means to approach healing. Across several studies that have utilized the arts, either visual or movement, clients have reported that engaging in the arts helped them express themselves in ways that words could not; they could more easily share material that was difficult for them to verbalize, and also more accurately portray their feelings (Leseho & Maxwell, 2010; Murray, Spencer, Stickl & Crowe, 2017, Shannon, 2019). There is a strong need for people who have experienced trauma to find effective ways to engage in therapy; therapy that may be less intimidating than talk therapy; therapeutic methods that utilize rich forms of expression which are more capable of conveying the gamut of human emotions and feelings. The arts truly go beyond words in facilitating communication, effectively conveying experience and emotion, as well as promoting healing and growth.

There is a large population of women in the United States who have experienced or witnessed violence against women or other traumatic events. Many of these women do not reach out for support, and those who do may not be able to effectively process the trauma they live

with by engaging in more traditional talk therapy. It is important to review how trauma affects the brain and lives in the body, and how movement, particularly creative movement, can be beneficial for this population. To build an effective form of therapy which utilizes movement, appropriate language to notate and better understand movement must also be employed. The therapeutic benefits of dance is not a new concept, but a very old one. Some elements of these ancient dance forms are believed to have connections to matriarchal times and goddess worship and are still at the center of some women's dances, including oriental belly dance (Shannon, 2019; Stewart, 2000). More information regarding the name, origins, and history of this dance will be further discussed in the literature review. Better understanding these historic dance forms may assist in understanding how dance can help support women in their path of healing.

For this capstone thesis project, I utilized selected movement rhythms which are core elements of oriental belly dance, a historic woman's dance, as a means of processing emotions and engage in healing from trauma. As a professional oriental belly dancer with years of experience in engaging in this art form within Turkey, one of the countries where this dance is a part of the culture, I feel driven to further explore the therapeutic benefits that reside within these movements. I have utilized this dance form in my own healing, as well as witnessed its usefulness in helping others find resilience within themselves. I wish to use my personal experience as well as learned knowledge around this dance form, movement analysis, and the expressive therapies, to develop a method of intervention that can be useful to a population in need, as well as honor the soul of oriental belly dance. To begin to delve into this task, I organized a therapeutic dance/movement workshop which was offered to women in my community, near Cleveland, Ohio, who self-identified as surviving trauma.

The workshop employed three oriental belly dance movement rhythms, which were carefully selected to engage and support women who have experienced trauma. Vibratory shimmies were selected to help the women feel grounded and supported by the Earth as well as begin to shake loose areas which may feel stuck, numb, or uncomfortable. Staccato locks and pops were used to help survivors of trauma reclaim their body and personal space as well as process the emotion anger. Flowing repetitive figure 8's were offered as a self-soothing tool which may also promote happy emotions. Figure 8's may also be useful as a centering movement that may help process thoughts due to the repetitive nature which tests extremes and always comes back through the center. These three movement rhythms complement each other by offering the mover a sense of support they can press into and gain movement (shimmies), a means to increase their body awareness while processing challenging emotions (pops/locks), and a way to self-soothe, challenge thought distortions, and move towards more comfortable emotions (figure eights).

The goal of this study was to observe if these specific movement rhythms (which are central to a very old form of dance that is primarily danced by women and for women) can help clients deepen their understanding of their connection with their body and their emotions, and begin to process uncomfortable feelings in a healthy manner. Clients were taught how to employ movement as a tool to release unwanted emotions in a safe way, as well as promote processing and healing from trauma.

Literature Review

Experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event can have a lasting impact on an individual which may not be easily accessible for talk therapy due to the nature of how trauma effects the brain and resides in the body. Approaching healing at a body level has proven to be an effective

means of therapy within this population (Cowan, 2016; Dieterich-Hartwell, 2017; Leseho, & Maxwell, 2010; Levine, & Land, 2016). When working at a body level it is beneficial to have language which is capable of describing body actions and movement qualities to not only record what has happened, but also to assist in understanding what may be lacking in an individual's movement repertoire, and find efficient pathways through movement to help them move towards healing. This idea of engaging the body in movement to facilitate healing is not a novel concept, but one that extends far back into history. This study will utilize key components from a very old female dance form to assist in processing challenging emotions and facilitate healing after women have experienced trauma.

According to the SAMHSA-HRSA (n.d.) "Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (para. 1). Because trauma touches many areas of one's being, dance/movement therapy (DMT), with its holistic nature, is uniquely equipped to facilitate integration and healing.

Women and Trauma

Women living with PTSD may experience chronic and severe symptoms including: "nightmares, insomnia, somatic disturbances, difficulty with intimate relationships, fear, anxiety, anger, shame, aggression, suicidal behaviors, loss of trust, and isolation" (APA, 2020, para. 5). Physical symptoms may include "headaches, gastrointestinal problems, and sexual dysfunction" (para. 9). Women also experience a longer duration of symptoms and express a higher sensitivity to stimuli that is reminiscent of the trauma (APA, 2020). Other psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and alcohol/substance abuse may also result from exposure

to trauma (APA, 2020). Despite the negative consequences which may follow the traumatic event, many women hesitate to reach out for help, with some waiting years prior to seeking treatment, and others never receiving treatment.

Trauma in the Body

When the mind is not busy with a specific task, the default state activates the regions of the brain which help create the sense of "self" (Van der Kolk, 2014). These areas include the posterior cingulate (which helps identify where one is in space), medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) (which acts like a watchtower, assessing the situation), insula (which relays messages to the emotional centers from the viscera), parietal lobes (integrate sensory information), and anterior cingulate (coordinates emotions and thinking). Brain scans of patients who have experienced severe trauma early in life showed very little activation in the self-sensing regions of the brain, with only slight activation in the posterior cingulate visible on the scan (Van der Kolk, 2014). This suggests that the brain learned to shut down areas which transmit visceral feelings and emotions which may have become too uncomfortable due to the traumatic experience as well as the symptoms which followed. The decreased activity in the mPCF may be responsible for a general feeling of numbness and lack of purpose and direction (Dieterich-Hartwell, 2017). While this may be an adaptive feature of the brain in response to trauma, it is maladaptive in the sense that it reduces an individual's ability to appropriately experience a full range of emotions as well as process sensory information, all of which helps an individual define a sense of who they are.

A disconnection from and lack of safety within one's body is often reported by trauma survivors (Dieterich-Hartwell, 2017). They may experience episodes of dissociation or unpredictable flashbacks which may lead to alexithymia. When remembering a traumatic event,

the left frontal cortex, containing Broca's area, often shuts down, rendering the person incapable of verbally communicating what is going on (Wylie, n.d.). Van der Kolk suggested "The imprint of trauma doesn't "sit" in the verbal, understanding, part of the brain, but in much deeper regions – amygdala, hippocampus, hypothalamus, brain stem – which are only marginally affected by thinking and cognition. These studies showed that people process their trauma from the bottom up – body to mind – not top down" (as cited in Wylie, n.d., section bottom up, not top down, para. 4). While there are clear limits to approaching trauma with verbal therapy, the capacity for healing through body-based interventions continues to gain momentum as techniques are still being unveiled. Understanding how to engage the body as an active alley in therapy may improve processing the traumatic event and bring the individual back to a more fully integrated and better functioning state.

Laban Movement Analysis

Because the body plays such an important role in storing information from traumatic events as well as the communication and experience of emotions, it is beneficial to have a language which can describe movement in an effective way. Laban Movement Analysis (LMA) is a well-established comprehensive system for describing and understanding movement. LMA provides the language and framework for better analyzing movement and deciphering movement interventions. It takes many aspects of movement into consideration including: parts of the body, movement qualities (Efforts), movement pathways in relation to the body and environment, and phrasing (Bartenieff & Lewis, 2002). Understanding the relationship between specific movement qualities and becoming aware of a client's movement profile can help a clinician better understand the client at the body level, so they may become better equipped at meeting the client where they are at, and then progressing in a life forward manner.

Movement is a psychophysical phenomenon which involves the full person and is intertwined in the many aspects that comprise a whole individual. Inner impulses are manifested in "outwardly visible bodily actions, while physical actions in turn affect the inner psychological state of the mover" (Moore, 2014, p. 23). Because of this, LMA may be utilized in incorporating movement into the treatment plan, and help the client make a gentler transition towards expanding their movement vocabulary and assimilate movements which may be beneficial for that particular client.

Dance/Movement Therapy

Dance/movement therapy (DMT), as defined by the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), is "the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive and physical integration of the individual" (ADTA, n.d., para. 1). Due to the field's distinctive understanding of therapeutic employment of movement, it is uniquely situated to work with clients through bottom-up processing, which may be more effective and approachable to individuals who have experienced trauma, than top-down methods, such as talk therapy. By engaging in DMT, survivors of trauma can use the body as an active agent in therapy, promoting processing, integration, and healing in a language that is understood by the areas of the brain which remain active despite reflection on the trauma. Researcher Bernstein (2019) stated "Dance/movement therapy interventions have the capacity to reshape the way trauma is held in the body" (p. 198). As movement experiences in the present-day are stored in tissues such as nerves and muscles, negative body held memories may be replaced with more empowered psycho-physical states (Bernstein, 2019). Research suggests that trauma treatment which engages the body may reduce the length of treatment due to facilitating connections between thoughts, feelings, neurobiology, and somatic responses (Levine & Land, 2016).

Research and technology are allowing us to see more precisely how the body is interconnected to other facets of an individual and how postures, movement, and dance can stimulate healing, including the regulation of stress hormones, preservation and growth of brain regions (Rehfeld et al., 2017), identification and enhancement of emotions (Melzer, Shafir & Tsachor, 2019) and more. Technology is supporting the ancient awareness that movement can facilitate understanding, healing, and growth. Throughout history to present day, across many cultures around the world, dance plays a vital role in healing, preventing disease, and promoting health (Cowan, 2016; Oesterly, 2002; Shannon, 2019) because it helps "stimulate the life energy in our bodies" (Block & Kissel as cited in Leseho and Maxwell, 2010, p. 19).

Norma Canner (2002) discusses the power behind experiencing something through movement, and then speaking of it and naming it so it may be "known on another level" (p. 12). This weaving of movement and words can shed light on the shadows and sew the many frayed, wounded, or disassociated parts of one's self back to the whole. To help a client bring themselves more fully into light and rebuild healthy connections with the body and emotions after experiencing trauma, it is crucial to attend to the individual through many avenues, including "the sensed, kinesthetic and motoric connections between cognitive processes (including the creative process), emotional responses, interactional patterns and the issues relevant to the therapy" (Goodill, 2005, p. 16).

Experiencing emotion through movement. "The life of feeling is best expressed through those forms of feeling we call the arts" (Eisner 2008 as cited in Linder, 2015).

A recent study by Melzer, Shafir, and Tsachor (2019) found "specific Laban motor components not only enhance feeling the associated emotions when moved, but also contribute to recognition of the associated emotions when being observed, even when the mover was not

instructed to portray emotion, indicating that the presence of these movement components alone is sufficient for emotion recognition" (p. 1). They found, "the strongest correlations between: spreading (or expanding) rhythmic movements and happiness, dropping the head with expressing sadness, moving or turning backwards with fear, and strong, sudden and advancing movements with anger" (p. 12). Perhaps these movement components may be utilized to help clients begin to feel and express emotions which may be difficult for them to understand or discuss due to symptoms of trauma.

The Embodiment theory suggests that we understand our own emotional experience, as well as that of others, through our own bodily experience and processes (Garcia-Diaz, 2018). Garcia-Diaz (2018) believes "[f]rom this perspective, the mind does not direct the body but is rooted within it and in the context where action is developed" (p. 17). By engaging the body in movement explorations, the mind becomes more aware, awakening that which may have been suppressed or shut down (Levien & Land, 2016). Knowing that the emotional area of the brain is often suppressed or dampened after trauma, it is important to consider the body areas and movement qualities which are associated with specific emotions. By helping clients expand their movement repertoire and increase their body awareness, it is likely to stimulate a reduction in trauma related symptoms (Federman, Zana-Sterenfeld, Lev-Wiesel, 2019).

Body, posture, and movement have been linked to states of emotion and affection extensively in literature (Garcia-Diaz, 2018). Studies revealed that emotional states are influenced by posture, gait pattern is motivated by mood or exposure to emotional stimuli, and emotional regulation in people with dysphoria can be affected by head movements (Garcia-Diaz, 2018; Melzer et al., 2019). Facial expressions are also known to help shape one's emotional experience (Garcia-Diaz, 2018; Melzer et al., 2019). The significance of body level feedback is

so strong that postural changes have been known to effect hormonal levels, influence self-reported affective state, and impact behavior (Melzer et al., 2019)

Emotions are not always easily accessible through talk therapy because emotions are stored in the body (Leseho & Maxwell, 2010) and movement may be capable of more accurately expressing one's felt experience. For survivors of trauma, the body may become a container of painful memories, but the body is also equipped for helping them achieve emotional regulation if they can employ conscious effort, using insight, and awareness (Federman et al., 2019). According to research, dance provided individuals a means of expressing emotions which they would normally inhibit themselves from expressing, or possibly even noticing (Garcia-Diaz, 2018); it offered them a way to bypass the mind or ego and go directly to their body and spirit (Leseho & Maxwell, 2010). Utilizing creative arts within trauma therapy helps individuals avoid intimidating verbalization of their emotions and memories and helps them express their feelings in new and creative ways as well as draw up old feelings that were previously beyond the client's awareness (Murray, Spencer, Stickl & Crowe, 2017). Clients also reported a release of tension after discharging feelings, understanding they no longer have to carry unwanted feelings (Murray et al., 2017). The release of pain, reduction in shame, and increase in trust have also been reported benefits through engaging in the arts within therapy (Murray et al., 2017).

Dance/movement to facilitate healing after trauma. "The overall objective is to free the trauma survivor from the emotional and physical impacts of trauma that so often persist in the body, emotion and spirit" (Bernstein, 2019, p. 194).

Engaging the body in dance/movement can help bypass the ego and access the unconscious (Cowan, 2016; Leseho & Maxwell, 2010). The dance within DMT can provide a survivor of trauma with avenues to connect with other survivors and develop lasting

relationships, re-establish a healthy relationship with their own body, reconnect with Spirit, build self-esteem and expressive freedom, access inner emotional resources, and provide a psycho-physical balance that can support them as they face challenges which may unfold through trauma therapy (Bernstein, 2019). Offering positive dance experiences and explorations can help survivors reclaim, re-inhabit and enjoy being in their body (Leseho & Maxwell, 2010; Shannon, 2019), and this befriending of the body is an important step in beginning to heal from trauma (Bernstein, 2019). These constructive dance encounters can help transform the survivor's experience of their body from that which houses painful memories to "an ally for discovering creativity, pleasure and for healing" (Bernstein, 2019, p.194).

Oriental Belly Dance

"The Goddess leads us into the spiral dance of life. She sends forth the winds, the whirling energies that bind existence in eternal motion. Through dance, She teaches her children movement and change" (Merlin Stone, as cited in Stewart, 2000, p. 15). The Goddess is inextricably connected to dance, and through centuries of patriarchal societies, some of the historic woman's dances have been distorted and some buried (Stewart, 2000). The roots of belly dance extend far back into history and have picked up many misconceptions en route to modern times. A common misconception is that belly dance was danced for Pharaohs in ancient Egyptian times, and for Sultans of the Ottoman Empire. Texts and paintings of dancing girls within the harems of Ottoman times are largely dramatized fantasies by male foreigners who never set foot inside these female only areas. The only clear remnants of dances from Ancient Egyptian times live on in poses and postures found in sculptures and paintings (Lexova, 2000), yet some still feel that this dance is Egyptian in origin. Many other theories suggest the dance was brought there by a nomadic group of professional dancers called the Ghawazi (Ghawazee or

Ghazye) (Stewart, 2000). It is theorized that the Ghawazi were a part of the Indo-Persian Gypsies who left northern India, traveling West toward Spain, with some groups turning South before reaching Spain (Stewart, 2000). The Ouled Nail of Algeria are another group of dancers with a mysterious origin. They have separated themselves from mainstream culture and therefore maintained their ancient traditions. Many symbols in their jewelry can be traced to ancient Carthage or Babylon, and their movements start with a rhythmic rolling of the belly and as the tempo increases other body parts join in (Stewart, 2000). These dances which shake and move the full body, including the torso, provided a shocking contrast from corsets, which were popular women's attire when belly dance was first brought to the U.S.A. When Algerian, Moroccan, and Egyptian "dancing girls" were brought to the public stage in the 1893 World Columbian Exposition (World's Fair), their "hootchy kootchy" dance reinforced the degrading, antifeminist misconceptions already in place (Moe, 2014). It was at the 1893 World's Fair in the United States that the dance was given the name belly dance (from French *danse du ventre*), and today some performers prefer the name Oriental dance to reduce the negative connotations (Stewart, 2000). In present day Turkey, this dance is known as *oryantal dans*, and when performed by a skilled dancer, it is considered an art form to be enjoyed by the entire family and is an important part of celebrations such as weddings, New Year's Eve, and other special events.

Historically, belly dance is a dance done by women, for women, and is centered around the navel to draw awareness to the sacred space of the womb (Al-Rawi, 2009; Stewart, 2000). In Morocco women used this dance to prepare for carrying and birthing children, and some villages have carried on this practice to modern times (Stewart, 2000; Varga Dinicu, 2011). Through dancing, the dancers connect with the sacred cycles of life (Shannon, 2019), they transcend one's own limitations, coming closer to the divine (Al-Rawi, 2009).

> The dances were used to strengthen sexual energy, to awaken joy, and to praise the mysteries of life. The woman danced their dance, a dance that corresponded to their body and expressed all the moods and feelings, all the longings, sufferings, and joys of being a woman. Through their dance, they came into harmony with the universe, abandoning themselves to life and to the divine (Al-Rawi, 2009, p. 33).

Therapeutic qualities of oriental belly dance. The sacred female dances, which center around the navel and evolved into today's Oriental belly dance, carries the memory of this past within its movements. These women's dances convey pre-patriarchal values, highlighting community and respect for life, and provide a safe space for women to express themselves in a way they may not feel permitted to otherwise do so (Shannon, 2019). By acknowledging the historical ties to the symbol of the goddess, women can embody feelings of legitimate female power and a female client can be "encouraged to know her will, to believe that her will is valid, and to believe that her will can be achieved in the world, three powers traditionally denied to her in patriarchy" (Christ, as cited in Shannon, 2019, p. 82). Belly dance accommodates a broader variety of body types and skill levels than most other forms of dance (Moe, 2014); likely due to the community building roots of this dance. Dancing permits the female dancer a right to inhabit one's body, heal one's self, and gain a sense of resiliency (Leseho, & Maxwell, 2010). In modern studies, women have reported that belly dancing helped them access their inner wisdom and connection with Spirit, express emotions and facilitate shifts in emotional states, reconcile verbal and emotional abuse, release judgement and control, acknowledge self-worth, challenge socially constructed boundaries regarding sexuality, and much more (Moe, 2014).

The three main rhythmic categories that are most predominant while dancing Oriental belly dance include shaking or vibrating, fluid or flowing movements, and staccato movements

which are often utilized for emphasis. Whether dancing the more emotive Egyptian belly dance, raks sharki, or the more celebratory style of Turkish Oryantal dans, all of these rhythms are used to help the dancer bring the music to life, connect with the audience, and add their emotion and personal style to the dance. Downward or inward staccato movement often helps emphasize distrust, hurt, or painful emotions, while upward or outward staccato movement are more characteristic of joyous or playful moments. Staccato is also an effective way of claiming one's space and identifying body and energetic boundaries. Dance teacher and author Gabrielle Roth (1998) identifies staccato as a way of "articulating our separateness, creating walls or breaking them down" (p. 83), testing limits, taking action, getting in touch with one's energies and passions and expressing them to others, and letting go. Fluid and flowing movements can add a sense of sifting through, clearing away, or unraveling. Flowing is the rhythm of the earth, the rhythm that connects us to our individual energy, flexibility, intuition, and our bond to the Great Mother and birth cycle (Roth, 1998). Shimmies can ignite energy, draw focus, and both build and/or release tension. Researcher Bernstein (2019) understands how shaking dances can help movers shake off, shake out, or shake free. In my experience the vibrations of a shimmy can be the catalyst to knock loose self-imposed ties, or inhibition, providing a pathway for emotions to be explored and expelled, and through this progression of awareness or permission and release, move towards feelings of joy.

By integrating recent findings of how movement is interconnected with emotions, theories of how rhythms effect people, and female specific movement rhythms which have been passed down since ancient times, it is hoped to decipher effective body level tools which can facilitate healing in women who have experienced trauma.

Methods

This study was conducted through two independent two and a half hour workshops. The workshops were held in an open studio space within the researcher's home. The sessions were video recorded with permission of all participants, and the camera was situated to allow for ample space off screen which provided space for freedom of movement should they not wish to be filmed. The first workshop was attended by 6 women and the second by 3 women (n=9) who self-identify as being impacted by trauma. Women for this workshop were recruited through an Internet post for a free therapeutic dance workshop focused around healing from trauma. The post was placed on Nextdoor (Appendix A), a neighborhood website, and both workshops were filled within 36 hours.

This workshop explored if staccato pops and locks, which are strong sudden movements, helped participants reclaim their body and physical space, and express and alleviate feelings of anger. Fluid figure eights, with a rhythmic and expanding quality, helped soothe, provided stronger self-awareness, and connected participants with feeling happiness. Vibratory shimmies are strong and quick movements which created a rhythmic quality which radiated throughout the body. Shimmies were utilized to help participants experience a mix of first fully feeling their blocked emotions, releasing the challenging emotion, and then moving into a sense of empowerment and happiness, as this is a progression which I have felt when engaging in a vigorous shimmy while reflecting on something that has stifled or provoked me.

The only requirement to attend was to be a female who identified as having experienced trauma. Coincidently, participants all spoke English as a primary language, were born in the United States and were residing in Northeast Ohio. All identified as White and age ranged from 33 to 78 (mean age = 63). Two participants identified with minimal dance experience at

weddings or events, three participants took classes during childhood (two took tap and ballet, one took musical theater), one had some experience with yoga, and three identified as having regular attendance at yoga.

Procedure

To help participants bring their awareness into the physical space, the warm-up began by walking throughout the studio, taking note of the details in the environment. Participants were then invited to acknowledge those around them through eye-contact, expressions, and gestures, as a way to non-verbally build rapport with others who shared the experience with them in their own unique way. The primary goals of this first step was to establish a sense of safety within the physical space as well as foster connection and support within group members. The second level to the warm-up involved tapping, brushing, or gently pressing the surface of their bodies with their hands while standing or continuing to walk through the space. The purpose of this was to draw attention to the outer boundaries of their bodies. Having positive body level exploration assisted in befriending and re-inhabiting the body, which are essential parts of therapy for survivors of trauma (Bernstein, 2019). The third and final element of the warm-up drew awareness inward. Participants stood or sat, and closed the eyes or softened their gaze, while focusing on their breath entering and exiting through the nose. Breath and emotion can coregulate each other, and breath practice can support emotional processing (Caldwell, 2018), so drawing awareness to the breath was utilized as a way to help participants attune to their emotions. They were encouraged to follow the breath into the body and notice the natural rhythm of their own breath in that particular moment. While maintaining their natural rhythm, they were asked to allow the breath to become exaggerated, visibly expanding the body with the inhale, and contracting and/or condensing the body with the exhale. The breath was the focal

point to lead this initial movement improvisation; this was to help them ease into engaging the body in movement, move their awareness deeper into their bodies, and begin to listen to inner impulses. Engaging in spontaneous dance/movement "reinforces the right to control one's own body" (Bernstein, 2019, p. 199).

Once safety within the group had been established, the body warmed, and awareness shifted inward, participants were then led through a body scan that flowed into a Focusing Oriented Art Therapy (FOAT) directive. The body scan began at the head, and ended at the feet, thus reducing the likelihood of becoming stuck in thoughts upon finishing, and to also provide more areas of exploration prior to reaching the pelvic area, which may have been triggering for some individuals. With the body scan completed, participants were asked to approach the body with a curiosity as they were led through a focusing exercise, sensing where hope and/or wisdom resided within their body. They chose either a female body outline on white paper, a neutral ginger bread figure cut out of colored construction paper, or a full sheet of construction paper to draw or write on as a way to help externalize anything that may have been revealed through the body scan and focusing exercise. Once the hope and/or wisdom inspired artwork was completed, participants turned their focus inward for a second focusing exercise. The second focusing explored where and how the body held uncomfortable emotions or unpleasant memories. After the guided focusing, participants returned to the body forms and art supplies to create a second visual artwork, this time depicting the information received from their body regarding an uncomfortable emotion or unpleasant memory which became the focal point for the following directives. By drawing upon sensory information to create a visible representation for further exploration, focusing paired with art making facilitated the expression of preverbal, nonverbal, and implicit memory (Rappaport, 2011).

Participants then used this visual artwork and information gleamed through the body scan and focusing as inspiration for improvisational movement through which they further explored uncomfortable feelings and emotions, and unpleasant memories they felt drawn to work with. Improvisational movement was utilized because DMT pioneer Blanch Evans recognized "Improvisation implies absorption, concentration and honesty…. Improvisation is dependent on an over-all state of receptivity, which permits a free-flowing stream of associative content, externalized into action. Self-consciousness is replaced with identification with your theme" (Evans, as cited in Bernstein, 2019, p. 197). If participants felt stuck, they were encouraged to close their eyes, if comfortable to do so, and focus on the area of their body where they felt some of the uncomfortable emotions they wished to shift. For those who still struggled to find movement, they were then prompted to utilize the breath as a tool to help initiate movement through the body areas which held more information during the previous body scan and focusing. Participants engaged in improvisational movement explorations for several minutes before being asked to find a movement phrase or gesture that best encapsulated this uncomfortable feeling or unpleasant memory they were working with. Once they had established a movement phrase or gesture, participants formed a circle and were permitted to share their movement and their visual artwork at whatever depth they wished to do so. This coming together and sharing within the safe space of the therapeutic workshop can be the impetus building relationships (Levine & Land, 2016) and also help integrate the right and left hemispheres of the brain where imagery and art, and verbal information are respectively processed (Rappaport, 2011). While they had the opportunity to refrain from sharing if they wished, everyone chose to share a movement phrase. This movement was reflected back to the initiator by myself and all other participants as a way to increase self-awareness, expand

movement vocabulary, engage in kinesthetic empathy, and help the initiator feel seen and validated (Levine & Land, 2016). By keeping the processing and focus on the movement, participants addressed the impact of trauma without directly focusing on the traumatic experience (Bernstein, 2019)

This sharing and reflecting of movement was continued when I, a professional oriental belly dancer, then demonstrated the movement rhythms being utilized for this workshop. The selected movement rhythms for this study included: repeating fluid figure eights, staccato locks and pops, and vibratory shimmies. Introducing an array of rhythms assisted in providing a fuller dance/movement therapy experience (Bernstien, 2019). All participants mirrored the movement rhythms, feeling them within their own bodies. Exploring each movement rhythm together in unison helped create a sense of belonging and cohesion (Shannon, 2019). Participants suggested body areas we could then put these movement rhythms into to help stimulate participants' creativity and help them better understand the possibilities for incorporating these elements. While "trying on" these movement rhythms, participants were asked to notice which they felt most drawn to as well as which made them the most uncomfortable. They were then directed to incorporate one or more of these movement rhythms within their movement phrase by either inserting them or adapting the existing movements. After engaging in several minutes of movement, participants were again encouraged to see if a different movement rhythm might then be useful. They were eventually asked to find a phrase or gesture that embodied their exploration or current state. Participants returned to the circle to then share their new phrases and any new insight if they wished. Participants were invited to mirror back the movement phrases as a way to expand their movement repertoire and also gain greater insight into how others' movements made them feel.

Participants were then asked to reflect on how their first as well as their altered movement phrases or gestures made them feel. They were asked if they liked how one of these phrases made them feel, or if they wished to feel something different. Participants were then given the choice to adjust their movement phrases again or create a new movement phrase. These final movement phrases were then shared and verbally processed to the depth at which each participant wished to do so. I then led a movement cool down which was inspired by the positive information and insight shared by the participants.

The experience was processed together verbally, and participants were permitted to give feedback regarding their experience involving the three movement rhythms, through verbal or movement expression in the group, or anonymous written or visual art format. Once all group members had departed, I reflected upon the various movement phrases shared. A movement phrase was created to encapsulate the group's initial movements, their transition phrases which incorporated the three movement rhythms, and lastly the final movement phrases and verbal processing. After the completion of both groups the recorded sessions were reviewed by this researcher for further reflection upon participants' movement rhythm choices and how these connected with what had been verbally shared as well as postural changes that were notable in comparing the beginning and ending of the sessions. The prominent points were drawn out for further consideration.

Results

When researcher Shannon (2019) explored women's circle dances in the Balkans, she found that in the middle of a patriarchal society, women were transformed through their ritualistic dances where they could freely express themselves as well as reconnect with their inner wisdom, all of which facilitated healing. In these two workshops, group members found

ways to experience their uncomfortable emotions or unpleasant memories in a healthier manner and promote shifts towards healing and more comfortable emotions through utilizing staccato locks and pops, repetitive fluid eights, and vibratory shimmies. Three key movement rhythms that are central to oriental belly dance, a richly feminine and ancient dance form, were found to be beneficial for participants in this study.

While participants explored uncomfortable emotions and unpleasant memories through movement improvisation, several movement qualities were noticed across multiple members. Participants appeared to have a strong sense of inner focus with their eyes generally closed while moving. The most common movement qualities included a forward sagittal curve of the spine (often extending from the head to the tailbone), deep creasing or folding over at the hip joints, and using the arms to protect the front of the body or bind specific areas of the torso (the chest area for one woman, stomach for another, and multiple sites for three participants). The hands and head were other common parts of the body which were actively engaged in movement exploration. Their movement explorations were primarily confined to the near reach area of their kinesphere, exploring the space close to their body, and at times utilizing shape flow to explore the area within their body. The most common tempo was very slow with sustained movements. At times some participants had a sense of heaviness that propelled them to slowly bend and lower their body, yet the overall sense of weight was often absent. Movement effort was frequently neither light nor strong, and clients sometimes appeared disconnected from their sense of weight during their exploration. In LMA, this is noted as the vision drive which can encompass trace-like or transcendent experiences (Moore, 2014).

When sharing the movement phrases within the circle, group members would sometimes nod their head or offer a few words of how they too related to the movement as they embodied

the phrase, reflecting the movement phrase back to the initiator. This sharing of movement seemed to create a moment of coming together in a deeper more meaningful way, making it more comfortable to embrace this path of self-exploration within a group of women who may only share these few hours together, never to cross paths again. This finding coincides with many other studies which noted that arts-based interventions, such as dance, are effective in reducing isolation and fostering social support among survivors of abuse and/or trauma (Moe, 2014; Murray et al., 2017; Shannon, 2019). Embodying others' movements fosters somatic empathy and can strengthen the sense of support within the group.

Engaging in the three identified movement rhythms of staccato, fluid eights, and vibratory shimmies as a group elevated the collective energy level quickly. A noticeable shift to a lighter atmosphere where laughter was shared, and movement ideas were passed among group members, developed quicker than expected. Even members of the group who had previously engaged minimally in visible movement began to experiment, placing one of the three movement rhythms in various areas throughout their body. Group members naturally began to notice and try on other member's movements, showing a greater outward awareness among participants.

Participants returned to a more internally focused state when prompted to return to their initial movement phrase based on the uncomfortable emotion or unpleasant memory. The atmosphere became more subdued, with sustained movements centered around curved spines and exploration primarily limited to hand and arm movements near the body. Participants then adapted those phrases to include one or more of the movement rhythms. Through their experimentation with these three movement rhythms, the atmosphere had a clear gradual build as a sense of expanse and outward connection became tangible even though participants eyes remained closed.

As participants tried on the three movement rhythms, they began to engage with their bodies more fully. Knees and legs moved rhythmically as they began to demonstrate a sense of weight more clearly and a quicker tempo moved into their repertoire. Slow moving hands which previously appeared more paw-like, vibrated and fingers became differentiated as the hands carved out new pathways that ventured farther away from the body. Hips, torsos, heads, and arms moved in fluid eights, radiating a soothing sense as participants' faces softened, and a sense of breath and suppleness entered their bodies which were previously more ridged and tense. Staccato movements appeared as participants poked their chests and hips out into space, changing the shape of their spine. Others brushed or flung imaginary "gunk" off and out of their bodies, primarily through the hands and feet. While there were clear moments of staccato, most gravitated back to vibratory shimmies or fluid eights. While I did not anticipate this, I found it interesting as it felt reminiscent of the relationship of these movements as they are used in oriental belly dance – where staccatos are utilized for accents and bold statements of emotion while shimmies and eights are more prominent as foundation elements that carry the body of the dance.

One of the most powerful staccato moments I witnessed was with a woman who spent a great deal of time with a soft forward curve of the spine that often included a forward and downward inclination of the head as she turned in a slow circle, arms wrapped around the stomach. After exploring with shimmies and eights for some time she had reduced the forward curve some, but it was still noticeable. Then she began to repeatedly thrust her chest forward and up with a staccato punctuation, changing the shape of her spine from a soft forward curve to embody a stronger sense of verticality with her arms hung open, palms facing forward as her arms reacted freely to her chest movement. She then returned to exploring with sweeping fluid

movements and vibratory movements, but her dance had a new sense of verticality as her head was now held atop her vertical spine. The exploration of her arms never returned to her stomach, but instead stretched in an open upward "V" with vibrating hands that appeared to shake rain free from the heavens. Her slow circling around herself also stopped. With eyes still closed this woman turned to face two other participants who began to release strong emotions through tears. Her open arms and vibrating hands seemed to reach out to them, reinforcing a safe space for them to experience their own dances of healing.

One participant shared that she carried a great deal of physical pain along with other traumas she did not care to voice at the start of the workshop. Her first movement exploration was limited to her arms wrapping her chest area in an embrace and then her hands following her arms until they met and rubbed together, exploring all surfaces as if rubbing something in or cleaning something off before eventually settling in a prayer position. After offering the movement rhythms this participant began to sway her full body in soothing eights. She had moments of soft shimmies in her legs and hands, but always returned to the fluid eights that engaged her entire body in movement. Her ankles and knees flexed and stretched as her hips and torso swayed with her head held erect on top, eyes open, and arms reacting to the movement, freely swinging at her sides and sometimes passing behind her body. At the end she commented that she found the figure eights to be calming, and that exploring with the different rhythms helped her understand that trying different things can lead to different outcomes.

A variety of therapeutic theories and practices have provided one participant with many tools she could easily verbalize, but she found them challenging to use or less effective in real life situations. Shimmies provided her with a true release in an easily employable format that is always accessible. She described her initial movement as "bound" and involved curving the

spine forward from head to tail while crouching down and using the arms to "hold yourself… and not in a good way." She identified with self-loathing and shared that even while soothing and caring for others she could internally be mean to herself. Despite the movement in her first phrase being focused on a few body parts which carried similar movement qualities, she readily engaged in a broad variety of movement while exploring the three movement rhythms. The suppressive quality of her first phrase gave way to a lively curiosity that appeared playful as she used every body part and moved every joint through a truly freeing dance that always came back to shimmying and shaking everything from the hair on her head to her feet, and all the parts between. After the final dance she had a smile and appeared more energized while reflecting that she felt more "expansive" and free to take up space. "I couldn't maintain the grip while shaking… The shimmy made me let it all go. It's hard to be bound up when you're shakin' it up," she commented.

A participant who identified as being overwhelmed mentally due to graduate school and the many tasks involved while conducting music therapy, began to draw figure eights on her forehead and face, and then moved into staccato tapping that transitioned from being focused on her head to dropping into the chest area which then carried her into more full body movements. She discussed her awareness of some past events which have resulted in heightened self judgement that can be intrusive to her thoughts. By moving back down into her body, she was more able to let go of these thoughts and come back to the present moment. She anticipated carrying this body found knowledge into her upcoming practicum, reflecting that she finds it useful to allow her body to move with the music she is making. She felt that movement may support her in letting go of negative thoughts as opposed to being distracted and consumed by them.

For some participants the focus of their dance evolved around a specific body area. For others it was more about the shift in movement quality. Regardless of where the dance originated or how it shifted, all dancers began to engage with their body more fully as a result of their movement explorations. All participants eagerly volunteered at least one aspect of how engaging in these three movement rhythms had helped them experience a shift in their emotion or thought pattern during the course of the workshop. Many offered ways or places where they could engage in their new movement tools for self-healing or to facilitate positive emotional shifts. Overall, the workshop was well received and extremely successful. All three movement rhythms demonstrated clear benefits, many of which were received as anticipated, while some carried novel information.

Discussion

Participants were guided through a warm-up which drew their awareness progressively inward. This was followed by a guided body scan from head to toe and two Focusing Oriented Art directives which explored first where hope and wisdom lived within their bodies, and then identifying an uncomfortable emotion or unpleasant memory which would become the starting point for movement exploration. Improvisational movement exploration was utilized to deepen awareness and/or understanding of this challenging emotion or memory. All participants chose to share their movement phrase which arose from their improvisations. Group members reflected these movements back, which enhanced connection among participants. The three movement rhythms being studied, staccato pops and locks, fluid figure-eights, and vibratory shimmies, were then introduced and moved together. Participants incorporated these three movement rhythms into their movement phrases inspired by challenging emotions and memories. Reflecting upon their improvised dance with the three movement rhythms,

participants reported a positive shift in their feelings, noting a variety of benefits gained from their use of these defined movement tools. The extent of the positive shift and the increased energy level surpassed that of this researcher's expectations.

During the body scan and focusing exercises participants were asked to close their eyes if they were comfortable to do so; all closed their eyes for the duration of these activities. While participants were directed to look inward and follow their body sensations with a curiosity to help inform their movement choices, they were not explicitly asked to close their eyes, yet many did. This looking inward and drawing awareness to sensations is known as interoception, and when utilized during positive experiences, can be helpful in reconnecting with the body after experiencing trauma (Dieterich-Hartwell, 2017; Van der Kolk, 2015). Researchers Levine and Land (2016) note "[t]he body is deeply connected to the mind, and as the body engages in the movement process, the mind awakens and becomes more aware" (p. 337). Perhaps closing the eyes is a natural way for participants to reduce external stimulation, allotting greater attention to process this awakening of brain areas which may have been dampened due to traumatic experiences.

For the few whose eyes remained open while moving, they appeared less engaged with the movement as demonstrated by increased repetition, reduced creativity, and more moments of stillness as compared to the participants with closed eyes. It is unclear if keeping the eyes open hindered the mind awakening power of movement by dampening the experience with external visual stimuli. It may be interesting to look at how the presence or absence of external stimuli such as visual, auditory, or olfactory affects the effectiveness of therapeutic movement. How tending to external stimuli may interfere with an individual's capacity to explore their

relationship with their body is important, because befriending and re-inhabiting the body has been established as a crucial first step in recovering from trauma (Van der Kolk, 2015).

Through the workshop, participants reported a heightened awareness of their bodies as well as a novel understanding of the extent to which movement can be a source of information as well a means to increase control. Researchers Federman, Zana-Sterenfeld, and Lev-Wiesel (2019) reported that increased awareness of bodily expressions can lead to an increased capacity to contain and release energy, thus increasing one's capacity for self-regulation and reducing the sense of being controlled by the traumatic memory. In these workshops, participants drew clear lines as to how specific movement rhythms helped them intervene and gain control over an emotion, feeling, or thought. Further research would be necessary to determine if utilizing interoception while engaging in movement improvisation is sufficient to facilitate the same sense of control, or if the three movement rhythms enhance or speed up this regaining of control after experiencing trauma.

Along with the individual reports of improved internal states, there was also a shift towards being more outwardly engaged with group members. This study engaged a group of strangers who only met once. It is difficult to understand if the shift from isolating to socializing was a natural occurrence of engaging in movement together for the duration of the workshop, or if these movement rhythms, which are central to an ancient social feminine dance form, promoted this reaching out for connection. Research has shown that therapy within a group context can facilitate socialization by sharing their experience with others who have had similar experiences (Cowan, 2016; Murray et al., 2017), however, participants in this study were reminded that they did not have to verbalize their traumatic experiences if they did not wish to do so. Two participants in the second workshop briefly verbalized some of their trauma, while

no one from the first workshop voiced their traumatic experiences. Clues as to how they identify with trauma did not arise until processing how they found the movement rhythms to be beneficial. The question arises as to whether the social unfolding was influenced by the movement rhythms.

Women who use belly dance for their own therapeutic purposes repeatedly discuss the welcoming social atmosphere that is unique to this dance form due to its lack of judgement (Cowan, 2016; Moe, 2014). Where does this lack of judgement come from? This dance crosses many cultures. While the movements are subtly influenced by these cultures, these three movement rhythms persist as does the sense of inclusivity of all women who wish to dance. Is there something within these movement rhythms which helps break down one's self-imposed social barriers? When learning the three movement rhythms there was an almost immediate shift to social connection, one that I have not noticed when teaching new movements or rhythms in other individual dance forms such as ballet, tap, or jazz, nor social dances such as Argentine tango, salsa, or swing.

In both workshops there was an overall shift from movements which were isolating and condensing the body during the first improvisation to movements which were expanding and expressing outward connection during the second improvisation which incorporated the three movement rhythms. The horizontal plane, a plane that LMA acknowledges as the plane of interconnection and reaching out, was absent in the first improvisational exploration and phrases, yet present in everyone's second improvisational explorations as well as in most of the second movement phrases. Faces also became lifted and forward facing after incorporating the movement rhythms. Even the sense of being aware of one's weight helped enforce the sense of

presence and readiness to bring themselves more fully to the social situation they were submerged in, yet their bodies seemed previously unaware of.

These workshops have demonstrated the capacity for healing that resides within movement, particularly three movement rhythms that are central to an ancient feminine dance form which has already helped many women feel at home in their bodies after experiencing trauma. A deeper study of these three movement rhythms may help shed light on the ever-growing understanding of how the body holds and can process traumatic experiences. It may also aid in the development of movement-based interventions to employ with this population of women. It is my hope to contribute to the growing knowledge base of the effectiveness of DMT, while drawing rhythmic movement patterns into the expanding toolbox which therapists may access when working with women who have experienced trauma.

I believe there is hidden wisdom that lay within older dance forms which have survived the test of time. Through formal inquisition into these dance forms, we may better understand why these dances have been carried within cultures for generations and employ some of the most useful elements within the therapeutic setting, sharing the healing benefits with a broader base of clients. Even though these three movement rhythms are derived from a feminine dance form, future research might explore if their healing properties might also be effective on male or transgendered populations as well.

"In a Goddess-centered context…[a] woman is encouraged to know her will, to believe that her will is valid, and to believe that her will can be achieved in the world, three powers traditionally denied to her in patriarchy" (Christ as cited in Shannon, 2019, p. 82). Experiencing trauma can also deny a woman these powers by separating her from her body, dampening areas of her brain, and causing an array of challenging symptoms that remove her sense of control over

her own life. In ancient times women would directly commune with Spirit through dance, and also find healing as they moved their bodies, following inner cues and utilizing movement which was natural to the female body, movements which were rounded and flowing as well as those which shook the core and radiated outward, movements which connected them with the Earth as well as their body which was intertwined with Spirit. There is power in movement, and it is in the hands of current and aspiring DMTs to help those who have disconnected from their bodies and their dance, to find the right movement components to offer to a client who wishes to make the journey back to their most whole selves. May this dance of fluid serpentine eights, vibratory shimmies, and staccato pops and locks assist us on that endeavor.

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Appendix A

Advertisement placed on Nextdoor.com:
Free therapeutic dance/movement workshop for women

*****PLEASE DO NOT SHARE PERSONAL INFORMATION ON THIS PAGE, A PRIVATE MESSAGE IS PREFERRED*****

I am offering a FREE 3 hour workshop March 7th 10am to 1pm, or February 29th 3-6pm in dance/movement which may be therapeutic. The workshop is designed for women who have experienced trauma. The workshop will be held in the Banbridge/Chagrin Falls area.
*** Please do not share private information on this page - send a message for privacy reasons***

Please know that no one will be asked to discuss the details around their trauma. You may share what you wish, or even nothing at all. The focus of my project is to offer movement tools that have been carefully selected to help women move toward healing and better express and manage challenging emotions. The level of sharing is fully up to you. No names will be taken, and no identifying material will be used. I will be guiding everyone through some focusing oriented art therapy and movement prompts. How much you choose to move or share is up to you. I will be writing about the knowledge I gain from running this workshop and incorporate any feedback that is given.

This community outreach workshop is for my thesis project. I am in my final few months of a master's degree in dance/movement therapy through Lesley university.

I have been teaching dance since I was 14 years old. After noticing the healing properties of dance classes for many years, I began to do research and found the field of dance/movement therapy (DMT), which has been a form of therapy since 1940. Thanks to neural imaging technology, the field is quickly gaining solid scientific support, beyond the effectiveness which has been noted in the field of therapy for many years. I have been studying DMT through Lesley University in Boston and am near graduation. After years of students telling me how helpful my dance lessons have been in their lives outside of the studio, I am finally taking the next step in this amazing field.

Yours in dance,
Jenny Nehir

THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Lesley University
Graduate School of Arts & Social Sciences
Expressive Therapies Division
Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling: Drama Therapy, MA

Student's Name: _____Jenny Nehir Eish-Baltaoglu_____

Type of Project: Thesis

Title: Development of A Method for Utilizing Oriental Belly Dance Rhythms to Deepen a Client's Understanding of Their Emotions After Experiencing Trauma, And Move Towards Healing

Date of Graduation: _____5/16/2020_____
In the judgment of the following signatory this thesis meets the academic standards that have been established for the above degree.

Thesis Advisor:____E Kellogg, PhD_____ _____